

From Observations and Pictures to Images: Learning Lab@PP2 in Tourism Classes

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1 Abstract

The Learning Lab@PP2 (LL) concept is based on the premise that the learning process for 2nd year tourism students at the Polytechnic Institute of Beja (PIB), specifically in classes of the subject Professional Practice II, should occur in the complex context of society, organizations and social and professional relations that characterize the possible areas of tourism work. It is properly structured, contextualized learning, incorporating technical operations in tourism (in the areas of accommodation, travel agencies, tourist information), based on a set of activities intended to be entrepreneurial, interdisciplinary, experiential and social. The intention is to provide the student with skills not only in the technical domain (the so-called "hard skills"), but also social and human skills ("soft skills"). The ultimate goal is to contribute to the development of professional skills in tourism and also the students as citizens who must be aware of their role in today's increasingly global world. Thus, the methodologies developed under the concept of Learning Lab intend to explore and design transformational environments that will comprise the future reality of tourism students, framed by new educational contexts, such as experiential or transformative teaching (Brancard & Quinnwilliams, 2012; Cranton, 2006; Kolb, 2015). The Learning Lab includes a practical (not only) component, always concerned with properly framing it with theoretical knowledge that helps students understand the more operational procedures within exercises based on reflection and critical thinking. The activities proposed include five thematic areas: 1. Seminars & Talks; 2. Workshops (always with a practical component); 3. Support for Congresses and Events; 4. Field Outputs for Participant and Non-Participant Observation of Actual Work Contexts; 5. Watching documentaries/videography with reflection and discussion.

Within this Learning Lab rationale, this poster aims to present and share the benefits of using practical research tools in tourism education environments, based on two exploratory exercises (Rodrigues, 2019): (a) the use of visual-based methodologies (e.g. Photovoice); and (b) the use of Participant and Non-Participant Observation as a method of collecting and analysing situations. The goals of each exercise, the whole pedagogical procedure and methodology and the corresponding results will be presented. Regarding the photovoice exercise, the corpus to be analysed will be constitute of textual data (the comments about the photos) and visual data (a sample of the photos taken by the students). A CAQDAS (Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software) will be used, webQDA in this case. The approach and method to analyze the photos was based on content analysis, a method of analyzing visual images that was originally developed to interpret written and spoken texts (Rose, 2016). The procedure for content analysis will be based on Rose's (2016) methodology, composed of four stages.



The authors of this poster strongly advocate that the use of innovative pedagogical tools such as image and participatory-based exercises like these provide sufficient stimulation to engage learners in knowledge discovery, and simultaneously develop new skills that are truly important for tourism students. As stated by Mitchell, “*at the heart of visual work is its facilitation of reflexivity in the research process (...)*” (2008, p. 374). Thus, employing visual and participatory-based methods within and outside the classroom potentially makes the classroom more dynamic and motivated, facilitating understanding of the topics, concepts and phenomena under study and the education process itself. In an educational context, visual-based methods encourage students to strengthen their critical thinking, cognitive flexibility, reflexivity and awareness about today’s world. They allow the student to transform their observations and pictures into memorable narrative images that will shape their future as tourism workers. In this study the main limitation is related to the fact that the perceptions and opinions extracted from photovoice and participant and non-participant observation are strongly determined by the student’s perspective.

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